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South Dakota State Fair, By Gov. Dennis Daugaard

Labor Day weekend each year brings the South Dakota State Fair to Huron. The State Fair has had its ups and downs, but has been a constant fixture in South Dakota for 126 years. It is a true reflection of our state – the Fair’s barns feature the accomplishments of our agricultural youth, its stages and grandstand bring in more entertainment than any other celebration in our state, and its booths display our unique products.

Each time I visit the State Fair, I am reminded of its purpose: to pause from our labors, reunite South Dakotans from across the state, and celebrate that which makes us who we are. This year, I have the opportunity to celebrate and remember those who came to South Dakota before me. The Daugaard farm is one of many 2011 recipients of the *Century Farm Award* – a recognition given at the State Fair to all farms held by the same family for 100 years.

In 1911, my paternal grandparents, Martin and Margaret Daugaard, purchased a 160-acre farm between Garretson and Dell Rapids. There, they farmed the land and raised a family. My parents took over the operation in the 1950s, and likewise, my sisters and I grew up living and working on the farm. Linda and I moved back to the farm in 1983 and built our own home there, raising our three children across the yard from my parents. The farm is a source of pride for my family.

We love the land and are grateful for the work of those who came before us. I can think of no more fitting venue for receiving the award than our State Fair.

The South Dakota State Fair provides reminders of our past, examples of our present, and a link to our future. Without a doubt, the State Fair is a refreshing celebration, pure and good in its constitution, harkening back to a simpler time. The Fair is also a festival of our present. It brings us together with neighbors from across the state to share stories, exhibit our wares, do business, and make plans. It binds us to one another as a single state, a single family. The Fair shows us also what our family will look like in years to come. Our farm youth, the next-generation backbone of our economy, are given recognition for a year of hard work.

In the middle of it all, the state’s largest collection of amusement park-style rides attracts youngsters like nothing else can. From Ferris wheels, to tilt-o-whirls, to scramblers, the opportunities for gastric distress abound. It is truly great to be a kid at the State Fair – whatever your age.

This month, I hope South Dakotans enjoy the State Fair, Sept. 1-5. It is a celebration of who we are. It is a celebration of what makes us great.

